



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**TISSUE SPECIFIC LOCALIZATION OF SEVERAL OIL PALM GENES
DURING FLOWER DEVELOPMENT**

ZAIDAH BT. RAHMAT

FSMB 2001 29

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By

ZAIDAH BT. RAHMAT

**Thesis is Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of
Science in the Faculty of Food Science and Biotechnology
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

July 2001

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Chairman: Assoc. Prof. Dr. K. Harikrishna, Ph.D.

Faculty : Food Science & Biotechnology

Flowering is the first introductory step to fruit formation and is a fundamental part of the plants reproduction system. Flowers and fruit are also an integral part of seed production. In most crops, the control of flowering is an important aspect of growth and development. If oil palm flowering could be controlled, yield could be improved by stimulating flowering in accordance to permissive environmental factors. In order to determine the factors that influence flowering of oil palm, the physiological background and the flowering process must be studied. However, oil palm micropropagation had come up against a major difficulty with the discovery of a floral morphogenesis abnormality induced by *in vitro* regeneration (Corley et al., 1986; Toruan-Mathius et al., 1998).

From the examination of both morphology and anatomy of oil palm flower development, 9 key stages of normal and abnormal flower development has been classified to assist in

the study of tissue specific expression of flowering genes. As plant organ systems are composed of anatomically similar cells and tissues, *in situ* hybridization was chosen as a method of determining gene expression based on its sensitivity and ability to determine the specific location of an mRNA. Examinations carried out on 4 oil palm flowering genes provide more information about the processes occurring during normal and abnormal flower formation of oil palm. OPSOC1, an oil palm homologue of AGL20 and OPLFY, the LFY homologue of oil palm, are both expressed throughout flower initiation and development. OPRLK5, a member of the receptor kinase gene family, is expressed throughout flower development. The last gene, OPUIP2, which encodes a UFO-interacting protein, is also expressed throughout flower development but it is not needed during inflorescence meristem development. Combined with other studies in this area, it is hoped that an understanding of the floral abnormality may be within reach in the near future.

Attempts to isolate flower specific genes from an oil palm floral cDNA library however have been unsuccessful. The choice of cDNA library and conventional molecular tools might not be applicable in isolating these types of genes. Nevertheless, with advanced molecular and genetic tools such as yeast one and two-hybrid system that are being developed, isolation and the determination of function of such genes can be achieved.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.

**TISU SPESIFIKASI SETEMPAT BEBERAPA GEN KELAPA SAWIT
SEMASA PERKEMBANGAN BUNGA**

Oleh

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Bunga adalah langkah pengenalan pertama bagi penghasilan buah dan ia merupakan asas penting bagi sistem reproduksi tumbuhan. Bunga dan buah juga adalah bahagian penting dalam penghasilan biji benih. Bagi kebanyakan tumbuhan, pengawalan bunga merupakan aspek penting bagi perkembangan pertumbuhan. Jika perkembangan bunga kelapa sawit dapat dikawal, hasilnya boleh ditingkatkan dengan mengstimulasi perkembangan bunga berdasarkan faktor-faktor persekitaran. Bagi menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhinya, kajian latar belakang fisiologi dan proses-proses perkembangan bunga perlu dijalankan. Walau bagaimanapun, mikropropagasi kelapa sawit telah dilanda masalah berikutan penemuan keabnormalan morfogenesis bunga yang dipengaruhi dari regenerasi *in vitro* (Corley *et al.*, 1986, Toruan-Mathius *et al.*, 1998).

Daripada kajian morfologi dan anatomi perkembangan bunga kelapa sawit, 9 tahap perkembangan bagi kedua-dua bunga normal dan abnormal telah diklasifikasikan untuk

membantu kajian corak ekspresi tisu bagi gen-gen perkembangan bunga. Oleh kerana sistem organ tumbuhan mengandungi sel-sel dan tisu-tisu yang hampir sama anatominya, hibridasi *in situ* dipilih sebagai kaedah penentuan ekspresi gen berdasarkan tahap sensitiviti dan kebolehan kaedah berkenaan untuk menentukan lokasi mRNA yang spesifik. Kajian yang dijalankan ke atas 4 gen perkembangan bunga dapat memberi lebih maklumat tentang proses-proses yang berlaku semasa perkembangan bunga normal dan abnormal bagi kelapa sawit. OPSOC1, “homolog” kelapa sawit bagi AGL20 dan OPLFY, “homolog” LFY bagi kelapa sawit, kedua-duanya menunjukkan ekspresi sepanjang pengenalan dan perkembangan bunga. Manakala 2 lagi gen yang digunakan, OPRLK5, terdiri daripada keluarga gen “receptor kinase” dan OPUIP2, gen yang mengkod protin interaksi-UFO, kedua-duanya juga menunjukkan ekspresi sepanjang perkembangan bunga tetapi OPUIP2 tidak diperlukan semasa perkembangan “inflorescence meristem”. Digabung dengan kajian-kajian lain di dalam bidang ini, adalah diharapkan pengetahuan berkenaan keabnormalan bunga boleh dicapai di masa hadapan.

Cubaan pemencilan gen-gen spesifik bunga daripada koleksi cDNA bunga kelapa sawit telah menemui kegagalan. Pemilihan koleksi cDNA dan kaedah molekular konvensional mungkin tidak dapat diaplikasikan di dalam pemencilan gen-gen jenis ini. Walau bagaimanapun, dengan adanya kaedah-kaedah molekular dan genetik lanjutan seperti sistem hibrid yis satu dan dua (yeast one and two hybrid system) yang sedang dikembangkan, pemencilan dan penentuan fungsi bagi gen-gen berkenaan akan dapat dicapai.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 6th July 2001 to conduct the final examination of Zaidah Rahmat on her Master of Science thesis entitled “ Tissue Specific Localization of Several Oil Palm Genes During Flower Development” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which, have been duly acknowledged. I declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



(ZAIDAH BT. RAHMAT)

Date: 16th July 2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ABSTRAK	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
APPROVAL SHEETS	viii
DECLARATION FORM	x
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF PLATES	xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
 CHAPTER	
 1.0 INTRODUCTION	 1
 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW	 3
2.1 Oil Palm	3
2.2 Flowering habit of oil Palm	3
2.3 Sex Differentiation of Oil Palm	4
2.4 The Female Inflorescence and Flower	5
2.5 The Male Inflorescence and Flower	6
2.6 Hermaphrodite or Mixed Inflorescence	9
2.7 Flower Development	9
2.8 Meristem Identity Gene	11
2.9 Organ Identity Gene	13
2.10 MADS-Box Gene and The Evodevotics of The Flower	15
2.11 Floral Abnormality	18
2.12 Possible Causes of Abnormal Floral Development	21
2.13 The S.E.M. Investigation of Oil Palm Flower Development	22
2.14 Histogenesis	23
2.15 <i>In Situ</i> Hybridization	24
 3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS	 27
3.1 Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)	27
3.2 Histology	28
3.2.1 Periodic Acid Staining	29
3.2.2 Microscopy	29
3.3 Probe Preparation	29
3.3.1 Plasmid Midiprep	29
3.3.2 Double Digestion of Plasmid	31
3.3.3 Probe Purification	31
3.3.4 Probe Labeling	32

3.3.5	Estimation of Labeled Probe	32
3.4	Screening	33
3.4.1	Preparation of Bacterial Culture For Infection	33
3.4.2	Plaque Lift	34
3.4.3	Prehybridization and Hybridization of Plaque Membrane	35
3.4.4	Random Selection of Plaques	35
3.4.5	<i>In-vivo</i> Excision	36
3.4.6	Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	37
3.5	Southern Blot	38
3.6	Synthesis of First Strand cDNA	39
3.7	Reverse Northern Hybridization	40
3.8	<i>In Situ</i> RNA Hybridization	40
3.8.1	Probe Preparation	40
3.8.2	Fixation of Materials on Slides	42
3.8.3	Prehybridization and Hybridization	43
3.8.4	Post-hybridization Steps	44
3.8.5	Immunological Detection	45
3.8.6	Microscopy	45
4.0	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	46
4.1	Morphological And Anatomical Study of Oil Palm Flower Development	46
4.1.1	The Female Flower of Oil Palm	48
4.1.2	The Male Flower of Oil Palm	55
4.1.3	Stages of Oil Palm Flower Development	59
4.2	Analysis of Tissue Expression Pattern During Floral Development	68
4.2.1	Expression Pattern of OPSOC1	72
4.2.2	OPLFY 3' Was Expressed Throughout Meristem Development	79
4.2.3	OPRLK5 Showed Continuous Expression Throughout Floral Development	83
4.2.4	Expression Pattern of OPUIP2	85
4.3	Screening	93
4.3.1	Isolation of Plaques of Interest	93
4.3.2	PCR Amplification of Isolated cDNA Clones	95
4.3.3	Reverse Northern Analysis	95
4.3.4	Sequence Analysis of Screening Clones	97
4.4	Possible Reasons For Failure To Isolate Flower Specific Gene From Screening	101
5.0	CONCLUSION	103
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	106

APPENDICES	117
DIAGRAM OF WILD-TYPE FLOWER & THE “ABC” MODEL	117
THE CIRCULAR MAP & POLYLINKER SEQUENCE	
OF THE pBluescript® SK (+/-) PHAGEMID	118
THE MAP OF PCR R 2.1-TOPO	119
DIAGRAM OF NONRADIOACTIVE DIG RNA-LABELING BY IN	
VITRO TRANSCRIPTION & POLYLINKER SITES OF THE	
TRANSCRIPTION VECTORS pSPT18 & pSPT19	120
THE CHEMICAL & MEDIA FORMULATIONS	121
VITA	122

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Summary of Stages of Oil Palm Flower Development.....	67
2	Summary of Screening Work With The 5 Probes.....	94
3	Summary of Reverse Northern Analysis.....	96

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Female Flower of the Oil Palm.....	7
2	Male Flower of the Oil Palm.....	8
3	Hermaphrodite or mixed inflorescence.....	10
4	Abnormalities that occurred in the oil palm.....	20
5	Normal flower inflorescence.....	49
6	Normal carpel in close position (A). Stigmatic papillae are formed at the centre of each carpel (B).....	50
7	Development of female flower from the triad of abnormal female flower.....	52
8	Abnormal carpels (A & B) and cross sections of the normal carpel (C) and abnormal carpel (D).....	53
9	Normal male inflorescence.....	55
10	Stamens from normal and abnormal male inflorescence.....	57
11	Stages of normal flower development.....	60
12	Differences between the tissue sections before and after hybridisation.....	71
13	Expression of full length OPSOC1 in abnormal flowers.....	74
14	Expression of 3' end of OPSOC1.....	75
15	Expression of OPLFY on oil palm floral meristem.....	78
16	Expression of OPLFY at later developmental stages after meristem initiation.....	79
17	Expression of OPRLK5 observed in normal female flowers.....	84
18	Observation of OPRLK5 expressed in abnormal flowers.....	85

19	Expression of OPUIP2 in normal flowers.....	89
20	Expression of OPUIP2 in abnormal flowers.....	90

LIST OF PLATES

Plate		Page
1	An autoradiograph from primary screening with RIM4.....	94
2	Autoradiograph from the secondary (A) and tertiary (B) screening of the oil palm female cDNA library with RIM4 probe.....	95
3	Amplification (A) and Reverse Northern analysis of normal (B) and abnormal (C) flowers from the RIM4 probe.....	98

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Symbol	Description
%	Percentage
λ	Lambda
μg	Microgram
μL	Microlitre
μm	micrometer
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	degree centigrade
AG	AGAMOUS
AGL	AGAMOUS-LIKE
Amp	Ampicillin
AtOH	Acetone
BCIP	5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl-phosphate
bp	base-pair
BSA	Bovine Serum Albumin
cDNA	Copy Deoxyribonucleic Acid
Ci	Curie
Cm	Centimeter
dATP	2'-Deoxy-adenosine-5'-triphosphate
dCTP	2'-Deoxy-cytidine-5'-triphosphate
DEF	DEFICIENS
DEPC	Diethyl Pyrocarbonate
dGTP	2'-Deoxy-guanosine-5'-triphosphate

dH ₂ O	Distilled water
DIG	Digoxigenin
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DTT	Dithiothreitol
dTTP	2'-Deoxy-thymidine-5'-triphosphate
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic Acid
EtBr	Ethidium Bromide
EtOH	Ethanol
FLIP	Flower Initiation Process
FLO	FLORICAULA
g	Gram
GLO	GLOBOSA
HCl	Hydrochloric Acid
hr	Hour
ISH	<i>In Situ</i> Hybridisation
Jacq.	Jacquin
kb	Kilo base-pair
KCL	Potassium Chloride
LB	Luria-Bertani
LFY	LEAFY
LiCl	Lithium Chloride
MADS	MCM1-AGAMOUS-DEFICIENS-SRF

mg	Milligram
MgCl ₂	Magnesium Chloride
min	Minute (s)
mm	Millimeter
mM	Millimolar
MPOB	Malaysian Palm Oil Board
mRNA	Messenger Ribonucleic Acid
NaCl	Sodium Chloride
NaOH	Sodium Hydroxide
NBT	Nitro Blue Tetrazolium
NTE	Sodium-Tris-EDTA Buffer
OD	Optical Density
OPSOC1	Oil Palm SUPPRESSOR OF CONSTANS OVEREXPRESSION
OPLFY	Oil Palm LEAFY
OPRLK5	Oil Palm Receptor-Like-Kinase Factor 5
OPUIP2	Oil Palm UFO-Interacting Protein
PBS	Phosphate Buffer Saline
RNA	Ribonucleic Acid
RNase	Ribonuclease
rpm	Revolution Per Minute
SDS	Sodium Deodecyl Sulphate
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscope
SSC	Sodium Chloride-Sodium Citrate Buffer

SSC	Sodium Chloride-Sodium Citrate Buffer
TAE	Tris-Acetate-EDTA Buffer
TBS	Tris-Base-Sodium Chloride Buffer
TE	Tris-HCL-EDTA
tRNA	Transfer Ribonucleic Acid
UV	Ultraviolet

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tissue culture of oil palm was initiated in order to provide the oil palm industry with improved, high yielding elite palms by cloning mother palms carrying desirable traits. However, oil palm micropropagation, which began at the start of the 80s, has come up against a major difficulty with the discovery of floral morphogenesis abnormalities induced by *in vitro* regeneration (Corley, et al., 1986, Toruan-Mathius et al., 1998). Corley et al. (1986) discovered the first outbreak of floral abnormalities in 1986 and it is now evident that these abnormalities occur at varying levels at various laboratories.

Flowering is the first introductory step to fruit formation and is a fundamental part of the plants reproduction system. Flowers and fruits also are an integral part of seed production. In most crops, control of flowering is an important aspect of growth and development. And, if oil palm flowering could be controlled, yield could be improved by stimulating flowering in accordance to environmental factors.

In order to identify the factors, which influence flowering in oil palm, both the physiological background and the flowering process must be studied. From the examination of both morphology and anatomy of oil palm flower development, 9 key stages of normal and abnormal oil palm flower development has been identified. These

provide a basis for an examination of tissue specific expression of flowering genes during development.

Since the first report of oil palm floral abnormality, a lot of effort has been made to solve the problem. Genetic mutations in the APETALA 3 locus of *Arabidopsis* and DEFICIENS in *Antirrhinum* are found to produce phenotypes similar to the floral abnormality observed in oil palm. Thus perhaps by studying floral homeotic mutations, organ identity genes and flower development in oil palm, the problems of floral abnormalities can be better understood. Combined with information on gene expression patterns during flower development from other plants such as *Arabidopsis*, *Antirrhinum* and maize, predictions on what types of genes that are expressed at different stages of flowering can be made.

The aim of this project is to study the tissue specific and cell type localization of gene expression patterns in different floral organ and to isolate and characterize full-length homeotic genes that are involved in floral patterning and meristem identity. Full length homeotic genes will contribute to the further understanding of the floral abnormality in oil palm by contributing to the development of a DNA chip for the examination of the floral abnormality as many types of homeotic genes are required to be arrayed onto these chips. This project will lead to a further understanding of the function of flower-specific genes since the characterization technique used allows tissue and cell specific patterns of expression to be examined. This will provide a better view of the differences between normal and abnormal flowers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Oil Palm

The oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*, Jacq.) belongs to the family Palmae where *Elaeis* derived from the Greek word “elaion” or oil while the specific name *guineensis* shows its origin, the Guinea coast. The genus *Elaeis* was founded on palms introduced into Martinique, the oil palm receiving its botanical name from Jacquin in an account of American plants. Its natural habitat is believed to have been restricted to ecosystems such as swamps and riverbanks, with minimal competition from faster growing rainforest species.

Apart from being a large feather-like palm, it is unarmed except for short spines on leaflets on the leaf, which give a characteristic appearance to the palm. The palm is normally monoecious with separate male and female inflorescences on the same plant, but sometimes hermaphrodite flowers do occur (Hartley, 1988). The fruit is a drupe borne on a large compact bunch. The fruit consists of an outer *exocarp* or skin, the fruit pulp or *mesocarp*, which provides the palm oil and the *endocarp* or shell.

2.2 Flowering Habit of Oil Palm

The oil palm is a monoecious plant carrying distinct male and female inflorescence in cycles of varying duration. However, detailed investigation of the flowers showed that each flower primordium is a potential producer of both male and